



National Institutes of Health
Office of the Director
Office of Research Facilities
Bethesda, Maryland 20892
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January 30, 2009

Christina Lavoie
Md. State Highway Administration
Office of Highway Development
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Ms. Lavoie:

Thank you for coming to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Bethesda campus along with your associates from the Federal Highway Administration to discuss conceptual plans for roadway improvements at the intersections surrounding our campus. We understand that these proposals are in response to the increase in traffic congestion anticipated from the ongoing expansion of the National Navy Medical Center (NNMC) located adjacent to NIH along Wisconsin Avenue (MD State Route 355).

The proposals as we understand them would affect NIH in two important ways. First, they would provide additional capacity on the local roads by expanding the travel lanes onto NIH property resulting in the reduction of our perimeter buffer areas along Wisconsin Avenue, Old Georgetown Road, and Cedar Lane. Second, they would manage the additional storm water runoff generated by the road widening by establishing storm water retention ponds in our forested perimeter buffer areas along Cedar Lane and Wisconsin Avenue.

The proposed changes along Wisconsin Avenue are of significant concern. As my staff indicated while meeting with you, we are currently engaged in a planning effort to improve the streetscape and buffer area for the entire NIH frontage along Wisconsin Avenue. We have completed the inventory of features and are working to define conceptual designs that would improve the appearance of our streetscape and provide a more recognizable presence for NIH. The area that exists today between Wisconsin Avenue and our internal NIH facilities is already severely limited. Any narrowing of this space caused by road widening would greatly inhibit our ability to accomplish our goal of improving the NIH streetscape frontage along Wisconsin Avenue. It appears to us that the widening of Wisconsin Avenue could occur along the northbound lanes of Wisconsin Avenue adjacent to the NNMC, and you indicated the Navy is not opposed to this option. We recognize that this would require a shift of the road centerline, but we believe it is a more equitable solution for the long term, given the generous front lawn area of the NNMC property, especially since it is the ongoing expansion of the NNMC mission that seems to have created these widening requirements.

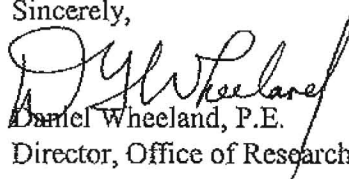
Road widening along Old Georgetown Road and Cedar Lane are also of significant concern as they would result in the removal of mature forested buffer areas that are useful in providing a visual separation between the institutional facilities on the NIH campus and the residential

neighbors across the road. In some parts, this reduction of forested buffer could not be replaced or supplemented internally due to the location of nearby NIH facilities. The large area that your plans designate for storm water management within the Cedar Lane buffer would almost entirely eliminate the visual screen between Cedar Lane and the NIH fire station. A further complication exists in that this area has been identified as having high potential for important archeological resources, and our Master Plan designates this area as best left undisturbed.

Regarding the storm water management location that your plans identify in the southeast portion of our campus, we would be pleased to share with you our plans for a regional storm water retention facility in that same location, which is a joint project of NIH and Montgomery County. The final designs for the Stoney Creek Pond are completed, and we have received approvals and permits from all of the regulatory agencies. We anticipate construction of the pond to begin shortly. It may be possible that this facility could accommodate additional storm water runoff generated by the nearby intersection improvements that you are currently considering. We can work with your engineers to determine if additional storage capacity in the pond exists to satisfy your needs.

In summary, the SHA proposals for road widening and storm water management are inconsistent with our long-range Master Plan for the Bethesda campus, and contrary to commitments we have made to our Bethesda neighbors, the Montgomery County Planning Board, and the National Capital Planning Commission to maintain where possible a 250 foot-wide natural perimeter buffer area. A portion of the suggested improvements appear to be reasonable, but will require a more detailed understanding of the design. Therefore, at this time, we cannot support the use of NIH property to widen the roadways or to construct additional storm water management facilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "D. Wheeland", is written over the typed name and title.

Daniel Wheeland, P.E.

Director, Office of Research Facilities

Cc:

Ms. Colleen Barros
Mr. John Burklow
Mr. Dennis Coleman
Mr. Thomas Hayden
Mr. Ronald Wilson



March 3, 2009

Ms. Barbara Solberg
Assistant Division Chief
Office of Highway Development
Maryland State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Ms. Solberg:

On January 14, 2009 we sent a letter to Ms. Christina Lavoie of your staff expressing our concerns regarding the Maryland State Highway Administration's (SHA) preliminary designs for road widening at several intersections surrounding our Bethesda campus. The road widening projects are described by the State as short-term interim measures to partially mitigate the increase in traffic congestion that is projected to occur on the roads in the vicinity of the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) as a result of the expansion mandated by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

Although we have yet to receive an official response from your office regarding the concerns expressed in our letter, we have received several additional requests from SHA for information, such as: the as-built plans of our on-campus utilities; the detailed plans for the Rockville Pike Streetscape Plan that we are developing; NIH comments on the proposed location and design of a stormwater management pond shown in our buffer area near the intersection of Rockville Pike and Cedar Lane; and NIH comments regarding the permanent removal of our East Drive access point from Cedar Lane. In light of the lack of an official response from your office to our previous letter and our opposition to your plans for the road widening projects, we do not believe it is in NIH's best interest to provide this information at this time.

Perhaps I should provide some background information to help put your proposal and our opposition into context. NIH is the largest employer in Montgomery County. We have a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) in place that voluntarily limits the NIH contribution of vehicle trips on surrounding roadways during both morning and evening peak periods to 1992 vehicle trip levels. We employ full time staff dedicated to meeting the commitments of our TMP. This staff facilitates car pools and van pools, operates several on-campus and off-campus shuttles, manages a Transshare Program for NIH employees, and promotes the use of public transit, sidewalks, and bicycle trails as alternatives to driving. We collect biannual traffic counts at all of our entrances and exits to monitor the success of our TMP. We are proud to report that since 1992 we have added several thousand employees and daily visitors to our Bethesda campus, while

reducing the NIH vehicle trips during peak periods on surrounding roads by 42 percent or more.

The plans that you have shared with us show NIH to be disproportionately impacted by the road widening proposals given our role in the anticipated increase in traffic congestion due in large measure to BRAC. The plans result in the loss of 2,950 linear feet of NIH property along Wisconsin Avenue, and 320 linear feet along Old Georgetown Road, as well as add 400 linear feet of additional impervious surface on our campus along Center Drive. This totals 3,670 linear feet of impacts to NIH properties, some exceeding twenty feet in width, while the total impact to the NNMCM based on the plans that have been shared with us is a 10-foot strip, extending less than 500 linear feet along Wisconsin Avenue. In addition, the plans propose to locate four separate stormwater management ponds on NIH property within our perimeter buffer areas, while there are none proposed on NNMCM property. Our perimeter buffers are in place to ease the visual transition and reduce the off-site impacts of our institutional facilities on the surrounding residential neighbors. Chipping away at the established perimeter buffer areas with road widening and stormwater management ponds will compromise our ability to succeed in this goal.

We continue to oppose the permanent and severe impacts the NIH campus would suffer should these road widening projects move forward as proposed. We encourage you to look at other options available to you for road widening and stormwater management that would be less harmful to activities on our campus and the general appearance of this portion of Bethesda.

Sincerely,



Daniel Wheeland
Director, Office of Research Facilities

Enclosure: NIH letter dated Jan. 14, 2009

Cc: Ms. Colleen Barros, DDM
Dr. Alfred Johnson, Director, ORS
Mr. John Carman, BRAC Implementation Committee



National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland 20892
Office of Research Facilities

April 8, 2009

Ms. Barbara Solberg
Assistant Division Chief
Office of Highway Development
Maryland State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Ms. Solberg:

NIH has reviewed the proposed BRAC-related road improvement projects surrounding the NIH Bethesda campus that were displayed at the public meeting held on April 2, 2009. As we have previously stated to your staff, there are aspects of the proposed design that adversely impact NIH's mission. For example, the proposed Rockville Pike right-of-way is shown cutting through two of our newest security structures: the Gateway Center's Multilevel Parking Structure and the Commercial Vehicle Inspection Facility. We request that you explore options that require minimal, if any, use of NIH property. One such approach could involve slightly shifting the alignment of Rockville Pike between West Cedar Lane and Center Drive to hold the right-of-way in its existing location on the west, while widening to the east.

For the portion of Rockville Pike that is south of Jones Bridge Road and Center Drive, we understand from the public meeting that the close proximity of several residential units dictates that widening occur to the west, into the NIH property. Given the alignment shift discussed above, we believe we can accommodate this need conceptually and are willing to meet with you at your convenience to discuss the details. In other words, in the area south of Center Drive, widening 355 to the west is satisfactory to NIH, whereas in the area north of Center Drive, widening 355 to the west creates major impacts. My staff is evaluating specific alternative road alignments for Rockville Pike that accomplish the above stated goals, and would like to share the results with you in the next few weeks.

We are encouraged to see that two of the four stormwater management ponds previously shown within the NIH campus have been removed. However, we continue to be concerned with the locations of the remaining two stormwater management ponds. Placing new ponds within the forested buffer areas that are known to have high potential for archeological resources would be inconsistent with our approved Master Plan. To help accommodate the need to manage increased stormwater runoff, we have offered to investigate the possibility of directing some stormwater into Stoney Creek Pond, which will be a regional stormwater management facility located on the NIH campus. The final design plans for Stoney Creek Pond were sent to your office in January 2009 for coordination purposes. Construction of Stoney Creek Pond will begin soon and is expected to be completed by the fall of 2009. Again, we would be pleased to meet with you to discuss these issues if you are interested.

Sincerely,

Daniel Wheeland, P.E.

Director, Office of Research Facilities

Cc: Ms. Colleen Barros, DDM
Dr. Alfred Johnson, Director, ORS
Mr. Phil Alperson
Mr. John Carmen
Mr. Andy Scott